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## COMMUNICATING HEALTH: MEDIA FRAMING OF EBOLA OUTBREAK IN NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

ADELAKUN LATEEF ADEKUNLE & HAMED M. ADNAN  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

### Abstract

Mass media cannot cure virus but can cure its spread. Framing of news stories in the Nigerian media (newspapers) is much more influenced by the economic motive of the journalists; picking news angle that arouses readers' interests in order to sell more copies in the keen competitive media market. The 2014 Ebola outbreak is a litmus test of how Nigerian media framed health issues, which depict the news perspective most interest to them. Through content analysis of two daily newspapers reports of Ebola during the outbreak in Nigeria, this study established the framing patterns employed while reporting as well as the preponderant frames used. The outcome is used to justify the priority upheld between the competing newspapers interests to sell and the media social responsibility towards containing the outbreak. The much capitalisation on treatment/containment frame portrayed the newspapers purposive interest to free the society of the outbreak, a reflection of its social responsibility role. The priority, which pose no threat on the professionalism of journalism was not only much appraised but also recommended for all media involvement in crisis reports.

**Keywords:** *Framing, Ebola, media, communicating health, media audience, social responsibility*

## BERKOMUNIKASI TENTANG KESIHATAN: PEMBINGKAIAN MEDIA TENTANG WABAK EBOLA DALAM AKHBAR NIGERIA

### Abstrak

Media massa tidak boleh pulihkan virus tapi boleh dipulihkan dari merebak. Pembingkaihan bahan berita dalam akhbar Nigeria banyak dipengaruhi oleh motif ekonomi wartawan; memilih sudut berita yang boleh menaikkan minat pembaca untuk melariskan jualan akhbar dalam pasaran media yang kompetitif. Wabak Ebola 2014 adalah satu petunjuk bagaimana media Nigeria membingkai isu kesihatan yang menggambarkan perspektif berita yang paling menaikkan minat mereka. Melalui analisis kandungan dua akhbar harian yang melaporkan kemunculan wabak Ebola di Nigeria, kajian ini mengenengahkan corak pembingkaihan yang di gunapakai semasa proses pemberitaan juga bingkai yang digunakan. Hasil nya digunakan untuk mewajarkan priority yang dipegang antara persaingan minat penjualan akhbar dan tanggungjawab sosial media dalam menangani wabak tersebut. Lebih banyak bingkai perawatan/pencegahan diketengahkan menggambarkan niat sengaja akhbar untuk membersihkan masyarakat dari wabak tersebut, menunjukkan tanggungjawab sosial akhbar tersebut. Keutamaan yang diberikan tidak mendatangkan ancaman kepada profesionalisma kewartawanan tidak hanya mendapat pujian malah mendapat saranan semua media yang terlibat dalam laporan semasa krisis.

**Kata kunci:** *Pembingkaihan, Ebola, media, kesihatan komunikasi, khalayak media, tanggungjawab sosial*

## INTRODUCTION

Media reportage of issues does not only vary from contents to contents but also varies in term of methods, patterns and essence of reporting, the influence of each report, as well as the effects of the reports on audience. The variations in the reportage are informed by various factors ranging from the issues involved, the media motives and objectives, the audience interests; each constitutes a pulling force that shapes the output and or influence the effect. Though, mass media have the power to pay attentions to some issues at the expense of numerous others, some issues base on their level of importance to the audience at a point left the media with no option than to give necessary attention to them. Examples of such issues are health outbreaks of international concern such as 2014 Ebola.

It is also pertinent to the public the aspect or angle of the stories, upon which media attentions are rapt, and as a result made salient. Health issues, unlike political and economic issues, (Cornelissen et al., 2008; Huang, 2010) are less of rivalry interests of the parties concerned. Media coverage of health issues as well as the news angles focused are expected to fulfil the essence of media involvement in the development of public health as well as public information needs for health decisions making. The mass media roles in communicating health related issues are expected to be more of social responsibilities that depict media as information custodians for societal development. How mass media manage health information most often reflects the public health awareness and their sensitivities to health challenges and needs. The Nigerian state of public health and the media roles towards creating health awareness and involvement in persuasive health campaigns do not seem corresponding. Perhaps, the mass media competition for market share to boost economic gains for survival is a crucial factor in the roles that mass media play in the health information delivery. Considering this state of health information coverage and delivery, it therefore poses a concern on the media roles and contributions towards a society free of shortfall in relevant health information.

How much the mass media are involved in health issues in term of frequency of health messages is not the main focus of this study since various research findings (Brodie et al., 2004; Caburnay et al., 2003; Catalán-Matamoros, 2011; Cavaca et al., 2015; Collins et al., 2006) dwell much on such at interval. The rate of health messages in the media, though

synthesizes public health awareness, the angles emphasized in the message contents are much more important. The news angles emphasised are important because they constitute a unique persuasive proposition as they become noticeable, meaningful and memorable to audiences and as a result influence public health decisions (Entman, 1993). The emphasis on certain news angle does not only describe the media roles towards health development but also define the interest that the media prioritised (between economic gain and social responsibility of the media) during health challenges. Nurturing the problem of where the media interest lies during health challenges remain a question that has its answer hidden in the contents of media health messages. The objective of this study was therefore to address the research problem by establishing the interest that newspapers most often protect while reporting health issues based on the proportion of salient news angles. Having this objective as the focus, content analyses of Ebola messages in two of the Nigerian newspapers were considered an appropriate method to reveal the interest that the media nurtured while reporting the outbreak.

Also, on the premises of the media framing theory, this study discusses the patterns that the media use to frame health issues. Ebola messages in the selected newspapers are thematically grouped based on the news angle emphasised in each news story so as to ensure the framing patterns engaged during the health crisis. The focus was also on the most frequent theme/frame in the Ebola messages as a guide towards acknowledging the interest that the newspapers most often protect during health challenges. These areas of focus are captured in the two research questions that this study intends to provide answers to: 1) How do the news media frame news stories concerning Ebola outbreak in Nigeria?; and 2) Which frame is more preponderant than others while reporting Ebola issue during the outbreak in Nigeria?

### **Media Roles towards Promotion of Public Health**

Studies (Benefo, 2004; Bloch-Elkon, 2007; Bratić, 2006; Catalán-Matamoros, 2011) have confirmed that the mass media influence public attitudes and decisions. The weight of this influence could be linked to how media structure news stories concerning health issues. It implies that how media frame news items determines the impact of such stories and the likelihood of the corresponding effects. An example could be noticed in how audience reacted to media (TV) reports of the victims (showing how the bodies were being retrieved) of AirAsia *Flight 8501* that crashed into Java Sea on Sunday 28 December 2014. Devastated

relatives of the victims collapsed in grief and were taken to hospital after an Indonesian television station showed disturbing images of bodies floating in the sea. There were serious criticisms on the way media reported the issue which is similar to the condemned media reports showing victims falling off Pentagon in September 11, 2001 attacked in America.

Over the years, a growing number of studies have attempted to examine crisis or risk communication strategies as well as media message design during health emergency (Atkin & Wallack, 1990; Cline & Haynes, 2001; Nutbeam, 2000; Wete, 1988). Some research efforts were also channelled towards studying media roles in crisis and the public perceptions and reactions in that direction. Various research evidences have proved the potency of health communication through mass media on the development and promotion of health issues most especially the outbreak of health hazards. On these bases are mass media considered one of the active players in the promotion of societal health both at micro and larger society perhaps through awareness creation, public education and enlightenment, and supporting health development policies.

Therefore, researches have proved that the contributory roles of the media towards any development goal including health issues is in its power to design, package and distribute effective messages, which inform, educate and to certain extent reshape the behavioural tendencies of the target audience towards controlling health hazards or combating health related challenges before they get out of control. For instance, Bernhardt (2004) concurs that Public health communication is inherently interventionist, seeking to promote and protect health through change at all levels of influence. When well-conceived, carefully implemented, and sustained over time, public health communication programs have the capacity to elicit change among individuals and populations by raising awareness, increasing knowledge, shaping attitudes, and changing behaviours.

The media roles in health was also confirmed in an address to the WHO expert consultation on outbreak communications held in Singapore, 21–23 September 2004 by former WHO Director General, Dr. Jong-wook Lee said, “We have had great success in the [last] five years in controlling outbreaks, but we have only recently come to understand that communications are as critical to outbreak control as laboratory analyses or epidemiology” (World Health Organization (2007, p. 2). The media involvement in health issues of recent

shows its dedication to public wellbeing by emphasising the importance of health in societal development as it is considered one of the indices used to measure the level of development of a country.

### **Nature of 2014 Ebola Outbreak**

Ebola is one of the most lethal viruses that infect primates. Records show that it has a mortality rate of up to 90 per cent (Leaug et al., 2010; Ogunbanjo, 2014). It is originally endemic to Africa and to the Philippines but later spread beyond. Due to its highly pathogenic nature, majority of the scientific research conducted on Ebola were conducted in a Biosafety Level 4 laboratory (AIDS/HIV is a Biosafety Level 2 virus). The constraint on scientific research that its nature has dictated has resulted in many significant gaps in what is known about it, and even larger gaps in what has been published about it before the 2014 outbreak. Its highly pathogenic nature has also resulted in a notable amount of misinformation that has been published which has a significant influence on the public behaviour towards the epidemics most especially in the affected West African countries.

In 1976, Ebola - named after the Ebola River in Zaire - first emerged in Sudan and Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo (Ogunbanjo, 2014). The first outbreak of Ebola (Ebola-Sudan) infected over 284 people, with a mortality rate of 53 per cent. A few months later, the second Ebola virus emerged from Yambuku, Zaire, Ebola-Zaire (EBOZ). EBOZ, with the highest mortality rate of any of the Ebola viruses (88%), infected 318 people. Despite the tremendous effort of experienced and dedicated researchers, Ebola's natural reservoir was never identified. The third strain of Ebola, Ebola Reston (EBOR), was first identified in 1989 when infected monkeys were imported into Reston, Virginia, from Mindanao in the Philippines. Fortunately, the few people who were infected with EBOR (seroconverted) never developed Ebola haemorrhagic fever (EHF). The last known strain of Ebola, Ebola Cote d'Ivoire (EBO-CI) was discovered in 1994 when a female ethnologist performing a necropsy on a dead chimpanzee from the Tai Forest, Ivory Coast, accidentally infected herself during the necropsy.

The virus has eaten deep into the public health. WHO's reports shows that the death toll as at October 25, 2014 had reached 4,922 out of 10,141 known cases in eight countries (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Spain, United State, Senegal and Nigeria), making the

virus more dreadful (World Health Organization, 2014). It seems the worst ever because it has recorded more death toll than before. The analysis of World Bank as in the table below shows the impact of Ebola outbreak on the growth and development of the affected countries in 2014 and short term 2015.

The spread of 2014 Ebola to some West-African countries including Nigeria affected social, education, political, religious and cultural activities of the affected countries. For instance, religious activities in congregation are crippled while educational forum such as schools, conferences, workshops, and seminars suffered embargo; all primary and secondary schools in the Ebola affected countries in Africa were temporarily closed and academic gathering in higher institutions of learning could not hold. Social gathering and interactions suffered setback; cultural values and norms such as burrier rites and naming alienated; and rallies and other political activities were given second thought by the attendees all in fear of having contact with the communicable disease (Ebola) most especially in the affected countries.

Ungar (1998) uses Sontag (1989)'s stands (who perceived terrifying diseases as both lethal and dehumanizing) in conjunction with the 'science fiction and gothic horror tales' as the bases of his argument to emphasise that Ebola causes the most horrific pictures of dying that one can think of. He writes "It is almost always accompanied by descriptions of liquefied organs, dissolving connective tissues, and profuse bleeding from every bodily orifice" (Ungar, 1998, p. 46). The havocs wreck by the outbreak does not only call for attentions but also summon the efforts of those who are in one way or the other involved in health related issues including the media. On this note, international policies on health and media involvement are assumed channelled towards kicking the virus out of our society. Members of the public are as well believed to be sensitized, enlightened, educated and mobilized by the mass media towards the struggle against the epidemics.

Owing to the Ebola threat, World Health Organization (WHO) declared the West Africa Ebola crisis a "Public Health Emergency of International Concern," in August 8, 2014 as it does to any communicable disease it considers a threat to public health, through the International Health Regulations (IHR) in response to such threat of emerging and re-emerging diseases. The declaration in the case of 2014 Ebola according to Gostin et al. (2014)

was a bit belated as the essence of any declaration is to seek concerted efforts to ensure that such disease is contained before they spread beyond control or beyond the boundaries of the affected countries.

### **Media Framing of Ebola: Between Issue Reportage and Public Health Promotion**

Larson (1984), refers to mass media as a window to the world through which people learn about the world outside their country. While Park (2003) however furthers the argument that the window does not show the world as it is. People only see the world within the frame of the window. If the frame of the window is too small, people will only see a small part of the world. Framing either as a media concept, principle, social phenomenon or a sociological discuss (Edelman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Goffman, 1974; Hall, 1982; Reese, 2001), is important in message positioning to audience. In media practice, it is the direction to which media perceive or want people to perceive a news story by making salient a news angle, based on its judgment of and reference to previous similar occurrences (often driven by editorial interest or ownership philosophy (Yusha'u, 2011)), which have significant relevance to how the public interpret and react to the entire story. The use of media framing to influence audience permeates almost all media reports to foster and trill the overwhelming media audience to align with the interest celebrated by the media. Media framing is used to give reasons to believe or disbelieve, support or desist, involve or withdraw, change or persist, and influence or discourage by twisting news stories in line with the media motive; give exegesis order than the right interpretations; and change, annotate or remove part of the content to influence the public judgement of events. As exemplified in many research works (Asplund et al., 2013; D'Angelo, 2002; Gerth & Siegert, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2013; Holton et al., 2012), its usage cut across all facets of human endeavours including artificial and natural events.

The outbreak of Ebola virus, which has been one of the global concerns since early 2014, makes banner headlines in the world media and perhaps formed news angle of audience attraction in the Nigerian media. Different captions, stories, editorials, photos and images, opinions, including cartoons and comics on Ebola occupies the chunk of the space on the print media, and news channels as well allot more airtimes to health talks, radio and TV dramas as well as newscast on Ebola issues than ever before. The outbreak also makes the

centre topic of discussion in the social media. If any, this could be regarded as the apex of agenda setting of the media on health. Various angles at which Nigerian media reported Ebola stories; the frequencies at which the stories were been reported in the media and the emphasis placed on it; the eagerness in the audience to know more in order to cast away rumours; and the aggression demonstrated by the policy makers to be on top of the outbreak involved every Nigerian in “what” and “how” to be safe of the outbreak. Media used this opportunity to demonstrate its value and power not only to influence the audience on what to think, discuss or be concerned about but also set modalities on how to think about the concerned issue.

The concern of this study is to establish how do the Nigerian media framed Ebola news items; and which frame is preponderant than others. Knowing this would expose the most prioritised among the media objectives while reporting Ebola issue. Did the newspaper report to sell by arousing the readers’ interests? Or did they report to fulfil their professional obligation to inform? Or did they consider their social responsibility to save the public of the dreaded outbreak irreplaceable obligation? Each of these is a factor that influences the media patterns of framing Ebola issue in Nigeria.

The interrelationship between media framing of events and the preponderant of the frames that breed the corresponding effects becomes a fundamental and intricate issue at any time the world health is under any emergency health threats. Its importance is much visible as a result of 2014 outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), (started in Guinea as an outbreak in February 2014, rapidly spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone, which are neighbouring countries and has engaged eight countries as October 2014) and its multiplier effect, which has recorded a significant number of casualties in the affected countries (Ogunbanjo, 2014).

Due to the recent nature of the Ebola outbreak, probably very few academic studies on media framing of the outbreak could be cited. Though, series of relevant academic studies and research efforts on media framing to be specific (Adeyanju & Oriola, 2010; Joffe & Haarhoff, 2002; Ungar, 1998) were conducted on Ebola in its previous outbreaks in countries order than Nigeria, which was at low key compared to the 2014 experience. Studies have also been conducted on the media framing of other outbreaks such HIV/AIDS (Bleich, 2007; Wu, 2006); Asthma (Johnson et al., 2011); SARS (Tian & Stewart, 2005); and Flu (Nerlich &



Halliday, 2007), perhaps none has been able to link the most salient news angle projected in the media reports to the interest that the media protect.

Media framing of news items is not done without reasons as every news item is sent out to the audience to fulfil a specific purpose (it may be for information, education, entertainment, merchandising, or any of other purposes upon which the essence of the message lies). The purpose for which the media send a message to the audience most often determines the interest that the media bound to protect (whether overtly or covertly) and that invariably influence how media frame such news item.

Finding the relationship between the variables will lay a solid foundation for establishing how the public perceive and respond to the way media present (framed) news stories on health issues most especially Ebola outbreak. The way issues are presented in the news guides how people perceive the message and how they conceptualized possible solutions to the problems presented or take to suggestions made. The public perceptions of framed news items order than health issues might not be applicable to media framing of health issues if it could be established that the essence of framing the duo news items is for different interest and the patterns of framing the duo differ. Smith (2014, p. 222), agrees that “....descriptive analyses of the nature of news coverage of health topics can provide important insights into how the public understands issues as well as how policy initiatives may fare.”

Going by the analyses of previous studies on Ebola issue (Atiq, 2011; Coombs, 2007; Ma, 2005; Niedermeir, 2012; Sobel, 2014; Thuesen, 2010), media involvement is well noticed in term of coverage and campaigns. But how effective was the contributions is a subject of many considerations since factors much more than the media influence breeds measurable effect in term of disease control or containment. Nevertheless, media impact could be measured along the public sensitisation and behavioural influence not to cure but to curb the spread of the virus.

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### **Factors Responsible for Media Framing of 2014 Ebola Outbreak**

Studies such as Shoemaker and Reese (1996), Borah (2008) and others have identified that factors such as organizational pressures and constraints, social norms, journalistic routines, pressures of interest groups, and the ideological and political orientations of journalists could influence how journalists cover an issue. Brantner et al. (2011) add that journalists give the story a ‘spin,’ taking into account their organizational and modality constraints, professional judgments, and certain judgments about the audience. Understanding how journalists frame their stories about Ebola outbreak and how it spread in Nigeria or its effect on people and society at large, and why they write from the perspective they do, are important for several reasons: to understand the news sources as well as the person writing the story and his/her context in relation to the subject matter; to appreciate the journalists’ interpretations of Ebola outbreak, its effect and the people affected; and to weigh the objectivity along with the subjectivity in the framing of the story. Gaining this understanding of journalists and their views reflected in the framing of Ebola stories became the focus to appreciate the foundation of how media reports are framed. (Burns, Richter, & Kant, 2013)

Another element that shape how news reports are framed is the editorial philosophy and ownership influence of the news media. Editorial philosophy reflects what a news media stands for and as well affect which information goes on air and when (at prime time or non-prime time, and longevity of time allotted) or make it to ‘where’ on the pages of the newspaper (front, inside or back page and the size of the space allotted). Chyi and McCombs (2004) also discuss similar element when they were analysing the four dimensions of media framing in the previous studies. According to them, the dimensions are: the topic of a news item (what content is included in the frame), presentation (size and placement), cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame), and affective attributes (tone).

This decision on where a news item appear on the pages of newspaper and through which format can make such story salient. Carter (2013) emphasise that the more pressing, “important” stories are usually placed at the top of each page, and the most pertinent stories of the day are located on the front page. He also considered that the audience focuses are usually drawn to (as cues that signify a story’s importance); word placement, font size, and colour, as all provide references for a story’s level of impact and importance. He concluded

that these media techniques frame reality by providing cues and making certain types of events more salient than others. In some cases, media audience are not passive. Although they are assumed weak and being driven by the media messages in some studies, it is not in all cases that the audience agree with what the media fed them with. They also influence how media frame issues most especially if they rely much on their experiences or have access to some obvious facts which the media cannot help but make salient. Besides that media audience select stories that satisfy their needs, they also sieve the stories they are exposed to even if they must consume such messages.

### **Methodology**

Reports of Ebola issues in two of the most popular daily newspapers in Nigeria (*The Sun* and *The Guardian*) were content analysed. The analysis was limited to the period of Ebola rampage in the country (July 20 to October 20, 2014). Nigeria is chosen as a case study because the country made significant headway towards containing the outbreak earlier than other countries affected in Africa and when compared with the efforts made and success that Nigeria has recorded in the other outbreaks threatening the country. Also, being the most populous African country and a window to the world, Nigeria has higher tendency of prevalence and higher chance of spreading any virus or disease across borders, which may constitute threat to the entire world.

A Pilot test was conducted with 10 per cent of the texts data (840 news stories on Ebola outbreak) from the sample newspapers using four independent coders consisting of media researchers, the author included. Employing Scott's pi intercoder reliability on ten identified themes from the Ebola texts gives 0.86 mean reliability coefficient within the range of 0.72 to 0.93, which is within the recommended intercoder reliability coefficient value for the liberal index employed (Lombard et al., 2002).

### **Answering Research Question**

Having the objectives of this study in mind, some questions earlier identified needed to be answered by the study to give direction towards solving the problems identified. There are variations in the way mass media frame news items depending on the types of news story, the target audience, the times of report, the central issue or key subject upon which the stories

revolved and the interests bade to be protected in the story. All these contribute to how a media report is being framed and that leads to the first research question:

**RQ1:** How do the news media frame news stories concerning Ebola outbreak in Nigeria?

During coding of the newspaper contents of Ebola, the coders identified ten most salient themes under which the Ebola reports are grouped:

1. Causes and transmission frame: news items that fall within this category of the frame discuss the origin and mode of transmission of Ebola as well as its signs and symptoms
2. Treatment & control/containment frame: news stories within this category discuss how the virus could be prevented from spreading, effort made towards its treatment, and the level of its containment
3. Fear and death frame: this category comprises news stories that raised tension as a result of number of infected cases as well as the rise in the death toll
4. Sabotage and conspiracy frame: it includes news stories whose contents focus on individuals, bodies or government activities disrupting the effort towards containing the outbreak. It also includes reports on unwholesome way of benefiting from the spread or effect of the outbreak
5. Government/Political influence frame: it is the reports about government activeness or otherwise through its policies, political rivalry, and
6. Effect frame: it comprises reports on the effect of the outbreak on economic, social elation and cultural interactions, education, health, international relations and diplomacy, sporting activities, entertainment industry and other areas of human development.
7. Sensitisation/mobilisation frame: it comprises reports on the education of the public on ways to prevent and manage the virus as well as how to report cases or persons with symptoms to the appropriate bodies
8. Consolation and support/Aid frame: news stories under this category discuss the financial aids and support towards the containment of the outbreak. It also includes stories on consolation of the victims and commendation of various contributions to sack the virus.
9. Rumour & misinformation frame: stories grouped in this category are those that expose the misinformation, lies, rumours, myth, and form of ingénue information about the spread, treatment or effect of the virus, either from social media or from unscrupulous individuals.
10. Stigmatization/discrimination frame: this category contain news stories on the stigmatisation and discrimination against the victims and their relations or boycotting the affected communities, states or countries.

If the newspapers emphasised certain news angles in Ebola news items as forms of news frames, then which of the news angles is more frequent than others as an indication of

where the newspaper interest is more arrogated. The interest that the media bade to protect determines which of the salient news angle (frame) is more preponderant than others.

**RQ2:** Which frame is more preponderant than others while reporting Ebola issue during the outbreak in Nigeria?

**Table2: Dominant frame/theme \* Area focus in the News Cross-tabulation**

Dominant frame/theme		Area focus in the News			Total
		Nigeria	Africa	Global	
Causes and transmission frame	Count	51	10	3	64
	% of Total	6.1%	1.2%	0.4%	7.6%
Treatment & control/containment frame	Count	197	31	55	283
	% of Total	23.5%	3.7%	6.5%	33.7%
Fear and death frame	Count	119	26	34	179
	% of Total	14.2%	3.1%	4.0%	21.3%
Sabotage and conspiracy frame	Count	20	11	12	43
	% of Total	2.4%	1.3%	1.4%	5.1%
Government/Political influence frame	Count	34	9	3	46
	% of Total	4.0%	1.1%	0.4%	5.5%
Effect frame	Count	38	20	15	73
	% of Total	4.5%	2.4%	1.8%	8.7%
Sensitization/mobilization frame	Count	57	1	8	66
	% of Total	6.8%	0.1%	1.0%	7.9%
Consolation and support/Aid frame	Count	20	0	13	33
	% of Total	2.4%	0.0%	1.5%	3.9%
Rumour & misinformation frame	Count	31	0	5	36
	% of Total	3.7%	0.0%	0.6%	4.3%
Stigmatization/discrimination frame	Count	12	0	5	17
	% of Total	1.4%	0.0%	0.6%	2.0%
Total	Count	579	108	153	840
	% of Total	68.9%	12.9%	18.2%	100.0%

More than one-third 33.7% of the aggregate 840 news stories on Ebola outbreak in Nigeria published in the two newspapers under study are on treatment and control/containment frame. It is the most focus area by the majority of the news stories perhaps to reap the society off virus. The predominant frame reflects the social responsibility interest of the newspapers to influence the public behaviour towards controlling the outbreak.

The primary interest of the Nigerian newspapers like many others across the globe (which is to arouse the interests of the public by writing from negative and hypertensive news angle in order to sell more copies) though was dropped for social responsibility interest, yet more pronounced among other frames. Averagely, one out of every five news stories on Ebola during the rampage features the frame. Many stories also focus on the effect of the outbreak on both human and the environment. The effect frame, which recorded 8.7 per cent

of the total stories analysed substantively tends towards negative than positive frame. Others frames that featured are: Sensitization/mobilization frame (7.9%); Causes and transmission frame (7.6%); Government/Political influence frame (5.5%); Sabotage and conspiracy frame (5.1%); Rumour & misinformation frame (4.3%); and Consolation and support/Aid frame (3.9%). The least featured among the dominant frames is Stigmatization/discrimination with just 2% of the total stories analysed.

More than two-third of the Ebola stories are on Nigeria while the remaining less than one-third focus on other African countries most especially the affected West-African countries and the global environment. This reveals that Nigerian newspaper looked more inward in their news coverage of Ebola than foreign despite that the situation of Ebola was more critical in some foreign nations most especially Liberia and Guinea. The newspaper focus more on Nigeria on issue pertaining to Ebola goes beyond satisfying the readers' interests but also satisfying media social responsibility to ensure that the public are saved from the world-threatening outbreak.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

The findings of this study in conjunction with the statement earlier attributed to formal WHO Director General, Dr. Jong-wook Lee that communications are as critical to outbreak control as laboratory analyses or epidemiology, are enough to justify that mass media cure the spread of viruses or diseases. Also worthy of note is the framing of news stories about Ebola, which varies from routine news framing patterns of most Nigerian newspapers, and much more influenced by the social responsibility of the media than economic motive of the journalists to compete for readership by picking news angle that arouses readers' interests in order to sell more copies in the keen competitive media market.

The most salient news angle emphasised while reporting as well as the preponderant frames used by the Nigerian newspapers justified the priority upheld between the competing newspapers interests to sell and the media social responsibility towards containing the outbreak. The much capitalisation on the treatment/containment frame portrayed the newspapers purposive interest to free the society of the outbreak, a reflection of its social responsibility role. The priority, which pose no threat on the professionalism of journalism

was not only much appraised but also recommended for all media involvement in crisis reporting.

What factors responsible for the change in framing pattern of Ebola issue?; How do the media audience perceive the media framing of the Ebola stories?; What impact do the Ebola framed stories have on the attitudinal and behavioural change of the media audience?; and are there relationships between media framing of Ebola stories and the early containment of the outbreak in Nigeria? These are some of the questions still demanding for research analyses to verify, ascertain and establish the relationship between media framing of health issues, the public perceptions and reaction to it and the effect of the relationship between the duo.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*Adelakun Lateef Adekunle* is currently a Ph.D. student in Media Studies, Institute of Graduate Studies, University of Malaya, Malaysia. He lectures in Mass Communication Department, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Before joining NOUN in 2011, he was an academic staff of The Polytechnic Ile-Ife and he later moved to Oduduwa University Ipetumodu, all in Nigeria between 2010 and 2011. His research areas are Development Communication and Communication Theories. [delak058@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:delak058@yahoo.co.uk); [adelakunlateefadekunle@gmail.com](mailto:adelakunlateefadekunle@gmail.com)

*Hamed Mohd Adnan* is an Associate Professor, and the Head of Media Studies department, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He is a media Researcher and consultant. He has a lot of publications to his record. [hamedim@um.edu.my](mailto:hamedim@um.edu.my)

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